United Nations A/C.1/60/4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 October 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
First Committee
Agenda item 97
General and complete disarmament

Letter dated 12 October 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the First Committee

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, made during the international symposium "Kazakhstan: Strengthening International Cooperation for Peace and Security", held on 8 October 2005 in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan (see annex).

Since the Republic of Kazakhstan was the host country of the symposium, I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the First Committee of the General Assembly, under agenda item 97.

(*Signed*) Yerzhan Kh. **Kazykhanov**

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Annex to the letter dated 12 October 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the First Committee

[Original: Russian]

Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the international symposium: "Kazakhstan: Strengthening International Cooperation for Peace and Security"

I am delighted to welcome you to this very representative gathering in the hospitable land of Kazakhstan. Our Republic, and its eastern region where we are meeting now, is directly concerned in the subject of the international symposium. I regard the fact that the forum is being held in this particular place as recognition of the important role of Kazakhstan in the non-proliferation process and in the struggle for security and stable economic development.

Today you have already had an opportunity to visit the facilities of the nuclear industry in Ust-Kamenogorsk. It was not far from here, near Semipalatinsk, and not so long ago, that one of the largest nuclear testing sites in the world was in operation.

Over the half century of the existence of the testing site, over 450 atomic and thermonuclear explosions were conducted. Thus Kazakhs, more than anyone else, know about the terrible consequences of nuclear tests. To this day not only involuntary spectators of these explosions, but also their children and grandchildren, are continuing to suffer.

This was one of the complex and tragic pages in the history of Kazakhstan. Along with the final closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, our State also took a decision to renounce possession of this lethal weapon.

After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a large number of nuclear weapons — strategic missiles with multiple warheads, which in the West were given the sinister name "Satan", long-range bombers and their atomic and thermonuclear charges — remained in the territory of the Republic. All this lethal potential was the fourth most powerful in the world.

At that time in Kazakhstan, there was a total of 148 silos for the launching of ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. In these launching silos there were 104 intercontinental ballistic missiles, each of which was equipped with a nuclear warhead. The payload of these missiles was 7.6 tons, and the range was about 12,000 kilometres.

And yet, for the first time in world history, Kazakhstan took a decision to voluntarily renounce all this fearful armada. This was our conscious choice, dictated in the first place by the fact that the people of Kazakhstan have first-hand experience of the terrible consequences of atomic weapons tests.

The decision to renounce the nuclear arsenal determined Kazakhstan's further strategy in the sphere of global security.

We were supported by the States of the "nuclear club": the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom, under an agreement signed by the heads of these countries.

On 5 December 1995, in Budapest, these States gave us guarantees of security and territorial integrity in return for our renunciation of nuclear weapons. China and France subsequently joined the agreement.

It may be said, figuratively speaking, that from that time Kazakhstan became a kind of "epicentre for peace", that is to say, a place where, for the first time in history, people who possessed destructive power voluntarily renounced it. As you will recall, a few years ago I wrote a book with this title.

With this decision we confirmed at the practical level our desire to live in peace, friendship and good-neighbourliness with all States and peoples. I believe that this may be considered a worthy contribution by independent Kazakhstan to the strengthening of stability and security in the world.

At the same time, Kazakhstan attracted enormous investments into its economy, and was able to start allocating all its resources to enhancing the well-being of its citizens. Our country is a leader in economic and political reforms in the post-Soviet area. The growth rates of the economy, amounting to 9-10 per cent a year, are considered among the highest in the world.

Today Kazakhstan is a consistent supporter of disarmament and of the campaign against extremism and international terrorism.

At present, one of the key elements of stability in the modern world is a stable system of global security.

The advanced state of modern science and technology, the accessibility of information in almost all areas of knowledge, and the significant reduction in the cost of industrial technologies, should all work only to the benefit of mankind. Unfortunately, progress is creating new possibilities, not only for peaceful development, but also for obstruction of such development. The global security system must therefore be constantly improved to keep pace with technical development.

Strict control of weapons, particularly of dangerous materials and technologies, is a key element of non-proliferation and the basis for any security system. Prevention of the spread of weapons themselves, and of individual components, at the global level is an effective means of curbing terrorism and aggressive aspirations.

The largest international programme for the development of non-proliferation regimes is the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, known in 1993-1995 as the Nunn-Lugar Program, named after the two United States senators who were its initiators.

The Nunn-Lugar Program had the initial goal of reducing the direct security threat to the United States of America, but over time it became a strategy for international cooperation among many other countries participating in the programme.

Each new stage of the programme involves a broader range of activity, more complex objectives, and an increased number of participants. The operation of the

Cooperative Threat Reduction Program in Kazakhstan clearly demonstrates all these attributes.

We may recall recent historical events: in 1992, while in a difficult socio-economic situation, Kazakhstan, after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, became the fourth largest nuclear-weapon State in the world.

The temptation to preserve these weapons was enormous. We were actually advised to do this by some "friendly" countries. Within the country, too, there were groups of prominent people who believed that the renunciation of nuclear weapons was a mistake.

However, none of the difficulties deterred us from our decision of principle to declare Kazakhstan a non-nuclear country. This historic choice determined Kazakhstan's further strategy in the sphere of global security.

The basic pivot of our policy is the development of non-proliferation regimes.

Thus, the objectives of Kazakhstan and the United States of America in the area of non-proliferation and reduction of the risk of the use of weapons of mass destruction coincided with the first stages of the Program.

The autumn of 2000 became a landmark in the implementation of the Program. During this period, the five-year programme for the elimination of the nuclear weapons infrastructure in the Semipalatinsk test site was completed.

Documents were signed reflecting the new direction of joint activity — prevention of the proliferation of particularly dangerous dual-use materials and technologies. This made it possible to start work on securing the nuclear materials of the Kazakh BN-350 reactor and its decommissioning.

About 2,900 kilograms of nuclear fuel, including highly enriched uranium, had to be placed in conditions which would completely exclude the risk of its illegal use.

In 2001 senator Sam Nunn and the President of the Nuclear Threat Initiative Fund, Charles Curtis, offered to assist the Kazakh Government in resolving this problem. Technical teams from both sides worked out a project on the safe transportation of fresh highly enriched fuel of the BN-350 reactor and its reprocessing into low-grade nuclear material.

The basic goal of the project was to strengthen global security by reducing the risk of the use of weapons of mass destruction.

I note with satisfaction that the project is now at the stage of completion.

The Nuclear Threat Initiative Fund underwrote all stages of the project, and carried out monitoring and expert analysis of its implementation.

Kazakh enterprises successfully accomplished the objective sought.

Summing up, I should like to note that the main means of preventing the proliferation of particularly dangerous nuclear, chemical and bacteriological substances has always been a reliable system of accounting, control and physical protection of such materials. In recent years the United States of America has completely overhauled its security system and offered to help the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States to develop their national systems.

A modern security system should completely exclude illegal access or the spread of material during emergency situations. This is precisely the goal sought by the Fund projects to strengthen the physical protection and prevent the proliferation of particularly dangerous materials, which are being carried out in Kazakhstan.

Where possible, however, the most reliable and economically viable means of averting the threat of the proliferation of such materials is their transformation into a state which would exclude their military use. Fast neutron reactors have now been in use in industrial facilities for more than 40 years. This means that the problems that led to the appearance of this Project will arise increasingly frequently.

The Kazakh project and the successful experience of reprocessing highly enriched uranium into low-grade uranium may become a successful example and a basis for the development of similar projects and programmes in other regions and countries. Kazakhstan is prepared to take active steps to publicize this experience, afford all possible assistance and participate in the implementation of projects.

We hope that our example will be beneficial for other States. In recent years, we have witnessed the failure of agreements adopted within the framework of the United Nations on nuclear deterrence, non-proliferation and the non-processing of nuclear materials. Our neighbours — Pakistan and India — have become nuclear-weapon States. This means that the world needs to find a completely different solution from that which currently exists. While affirming that nuclear weapons should not be developed by other countries and should not spread, the nuclear Powers themselves, particularly the largest of them, the United States of America, the Russian Federation and others, should set an example by reducing their own nuclear arsenals.

On the basis of the existing agreements, the situation has developed whereby some countries are allowed to have weapons and improve them, and others are forbidden to have weapons or even to develop them. This is wrong, disproportionate and dishonest. In the globalized world, within the context of the United Nations, I believe that this compact should be reviewed to reflect global actions and the responsibility of all States, above all nuclear-weapon States, to reduce their nuclear weapons and gradually destroy their arsenals.

We believe that the steps we have taken over the past decade have become a major contribution to maintaining stability and security throughout the world. The Republic of Kazakhstan and the multi-ethnic people of Kazakhstan reaffirm their historic choice for the non-nuclear status of their State and call upon other countries to follow suit.